

Evaluation of the **Power-One Project**

*A Re-Employment Program for Dislocated, Limited English -
Proficient Electronics Workers in the City of Boston*



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Thomas M. Menino, *Mayor*

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Constance J. Doty, *Director*

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Claudia Green, Evaluator

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Evaluation Contact:
The Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services
Todd Lee, Senior Planner
43 Hawkins Street
Boston, MA 02114
Telephone: 617-918-5226
Fax: 617-918-5227
Todd.Lee.JCS@ci.boston.ma.us

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001, **379 workers at Power-One International in Allston, Massachusetts were laid off** from their manufacturing jobs, giving rise to one of the most intensive dislocated worker programs in Boston's history. Led by the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS), the Power-One project attempted to maximize and customize federal and local resources in order to address the profound needs of the mostly Chinese immigrant workforce left behind.

This evaluation, sponsored by JCS, provides an opportunity to add to our understanding of the effectiveness of programs that service limited English proficient (LEP) displaced workers, who represent an increasing share of the displaced workforce-locally and nationally-and face considerable language, education and skills barriers to re-employment.

The program's distinctive design and implementation approaches to increasing the employability of these workers also represent important innovations in serving LEP displaced workers. Key innovations include:

- The attempt to create the "right" mix of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), skills training, job readiness, and job search assistance;
- The ability to provide services of significant duration by combining resources under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program and a National Emergency Grant;
- Efforts to accommodate cultural factors;
- The involvement of multiple stakeholders; and
- The involvement of a grassroots, community-based advocacy group.

The **280 workers** served were almost all (**97 percent**) **Chinese-American immigrants**, and over four-fifths were female. Their **average age was 44**, and they had an average formal education level of tenth grade, ranging from no schooling at all to college study. English levels were extremely low: 35 individuals were deemed to have absolutely no English at all, and nearly half had abilities so low that they could not function in any type of workplace other than the Chinese-speaking enclave in which they had worked. They were **earning an average of \$8.60 per hour**.

The Power-One workers were unfortunate to lose their jobs in 2001, at a time when the Boston area was losing jobs in manufacturing as well as most other sectors of the local economy. These conditions made for significant challenges to their reemployment efforts.

Nearly three years after Power-One began to lay workers off, **just over half (52 percent)¹ of the workers are re-employed**. Those who are employed are **earning hourly wages slightly higher (eight percent) than what they earned at Power-One**, which is commendable, particularly given the language barriers and difficult labor market conditions. For a significant portion of those now working, however, annual earnings and benefits status is worse.

The remaining laid-off Power-One workers are now without permanent employment or unemployment benefits. Some are being supported by family members; others may have secured temporary, part-time or "under-the-table" work that has gone unreported, or simply retired.

¹ Figures are as of January 2004. Updating of outcome data by JCS is ongoing, and by mid-June the rate had climbed to 61 percent. Historically, post-program review of employer records by the State also tend to show higher employment rates than those reported by career centers.

Participation in skills training improved labor market outcomes. Placement rates were higher for almost all participants who went through any type of skills training than for those who did not. They were significantly higher for those whose skills training followed an English for Employment (EFE) course consisting of English and job readiness preparation.

Customized skills training services worked better for Power-One workers than did enrollment into existing training courses. Offering participants a wide range of options through individual training accounts is positive, however, limited English speakers in particular need services that are attuned to their language, cultural and social backgrounds and needs.

Ninety-four percent of participants had at least **six months of English classes**, and **60 percent received a full year**. Modest average improvements of two levels in English allowed some workers to enter skills training programs and new jobs. Unfortunately, many workers did not qualify for any available skills program even after a year of English classes.

Extended services were highly valuable for those with the lowest English levels. Overall, this group did less well on employment and earnings, which is not surprising. However, those who followed up their English classes with skills training were twice as likely to find employment, and had stronger wage gains than those who did not.

Workers recognize that re-employment itself is serving as a valuable tool for further improving language skills. Even when some aspects of their replacement jobs, including lower compensation, worse location or working conditions--are a step backward, workers believe that being able to speak English and improve their skills is a worthwhile investment.

Most workers, including those who found replacement jobs and those who did not, will require additional assistance to reach family sustaining wages. **Re-employed workers are earning an average of \$9.29 per hour.** Interviews with participants and service providers indicate that program graduates received job readiness services focused on the next job, but emerged thin on knowledge of the labor market and career development.

As expected, workers with higher education levels and higher English levels had stronger employment outcomes than others. However, higher educated limited English speakers have difficulty in translating their credentials into earning power in the general labor market. They need assistance in gaining appropriate language training and access to their fields.

Most workers who found replacement jobs are now working in retail, hotels and motels, health services, and, surprisingly, manufacturing. A full 19 percent (and possibly more informally) are working in restaurants. Participants who went through skills training in culinary arts or hospitality were more likely to find employment in related jobs than those who went through office skills or childcare assistant training.

The program participation level was extremely high (74 percent) when compared to other dislocated worker programs. Concerted efforts by the Chinese Progressive Association to maintain group cohesiveness and by CPA and JCS to provide hands-on assistance to workers in accessing and registering for services were likely factors. Workers also were cognizant of their lack of marketable skills and the bleak labor market, and that in order to receive extended benefits they needed to enroll in training.

The workforce development organizations involved in Power-One were responsive and able to adapt their programs in various ways to serve this population. These included conducting initial, timely assessments of all workers, adjusting entry requirements for skills programs; increasing ESL content in courses, expanding the pool of employers and jobs targeted for placement; and adapting teaching styles and course materials.

Program participants found that English programs helped them considerably with their language acquisition and job readiness. These programs were less successful than skills training programs in placing participants. English for Employment programs may need either lower placement expectations or better tools and training to successfully connect participants with employers and work.

The Power-One project served as an opportunity for workforce development agencies to observe the need for and to develop sound approaches to addressing and accommodating language and cultural issues in their programs. Providers were challenged to understand the range of strengths and needs of this population, to establish meaningful communi-

cation, and to find appropriate teaching and job search strategies. Over time, providers met with some successes; however additional sharing of practices and training would be beneficial to providers and future clients alike.

Collective action and group cohesiveness was a strength of the Power-One group, supported mainly through organizing by the Chinese Progressive Association. It helped the workers win concessions from their former employer, survive a difficult period, and understand their rights. These approaches were less helpful in helping the workers transition into the labor market, where individual initiative is critical. Programs struggled to address workers' inexperience and insecurity in job hunting. Further exploration of how such political and cultural issues affect immigrant workers is needed.

JCS, the workforce development providers and others involved in the Power-One project reached a new level of program planning and coordination through this initiative. JCS should build on the success of involving multiple stakeholders including service providers, workers and community advocates; planning and procuring customized services; gathering input on appropriate industry and occupational targets given the service population; and hiring culturally, linguistically competent program staff.

More large-scale LEP worker dislocations are likely, given demographic and economic changes in Boston and elsewhere. In this instance, the employer failed to give workers and state officials proper notice of closure, and services did not begin until six months after the first wave of workers had been dismissed. Now, with tighter time lines in place for laid off workers entering training, state agencies must do more to maximize planning time and build long-term capacity. The state should enforce applicable laws more vigilantly, seek and obtain funds more quickly, and provide basic readjustment services in needed languages. At the local level, JCS and service providers themselves should look toward ways to broaden industry and occupational options; to expand their breadth and depth in ability and capacity to serve very limited English speakers; and to enhance collaboration between training vendors and career centers.

The presence of a grassroots community-based advocacy organization had a tangible, positive effect on program participation levels, the efficiency and coordination of service delivery, and in a more limited way, the workers' engagement in decision-making. This ongoing role also served to help attune the workforce development network more closely to the particular needs of Chinese immigrant workers. In the future, workforce development planners and service providers would be wise to engage similar community groups in outreach, development and implementation of services, particularly if and when linguistically and culturally appropriate capacity is otherwise low. Such groups might also be helpful in designing approaches to training that are culturally appropriate for the population.

Better collection and use of data are essential in order to make program-planning decisions and to evaluate processes, outcomes and impact. Much improvement is needed in the accurate and regular collection of benchmark data such as English skills. Likewise, data on placement jobs, including number of hours worked, benefits status, industry and occupation, also needs much greater attention. Program administrators need to require better accuracy in these areas, and staff should review data as it is received. JCS and other relevant agencies also need to address capacity to extract and analyze MOSES data on a regular basis.

Use of English skills assessment tools should be more standardized across service providers. Assessment should be done prior to commencement of services and at the completion of each service component. Even among the small network of service providers involved in the Power-One project, the lack of standard tools created difficulties and uncertainties. When students move from one ESL provider to the next, and from an ESL provider to training provider, it must be clear at what level they are performing. From a planning perspective, sound information is needed to determine the right mix of services at the beginning and at interim points in the program. Further, language skills should be assessed after skills training, particularly when the program integrates ESL. This will help determine the impact of training on language acquisition.

I. INTRODUCTION

In early spring 2001 the 379 workers at Power-One International, an electronics manufacturer in Allston, Massachusetts, learned that the plant they worked in was closing down. Executives at Power-One, one of the largest producers of power-conversion equipment in the world, had decided to transfer production jobs to Mexico and China, and some of the technical and professional positions to a facility in Andover. The workforce left behind was almost entirely Chinese-American immigrant, and over four-fifths female.

This plant closing gave rise to one of the most intensive dislocated worker programs in Boston's history. Led by the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services, the Power-One project attempted to maximize and customize resources to address profound worker needs with comprehensive services offered by a broad range of service providers.

This evaluation provides an opportunity to add to our understanding of the effectiveness of programs that service limited English proficient (LEP) displaced workers in at least two ways.² First, the population served by the Power-One project is representative of the increasing share of displaced workers-locally and nationally-that faces considerable language, education and skills barriers to re-employment.

Second, the program's distinctive design and implementation approaches to increasing the employability of these workers represent important innovations in serving LEP displaced workers with multiple barriers to re-employment. Key innovations included:

- **The attempt to create the right service mix**, using four different service interventions customized to the individual needs of displaced

Power-One workers. These interventions included (1) English for Employment (EFE) consisting of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) followed by job search assistance; (2) occupational skills training using Individualized Training Accounts (ITAs); (3) ESOL followed by occupational skills training using an ITA; and (4) ESOL followed by group-based skills training. While multi-service strategies have been used under WIA Title I, National Emergency Grants and even the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, the availability of considerable resources appears to have made it possible to provide workers with the "right" mix of intensive services. The evaluation findings support the use of multiple service strategies for LEP displaced workers versus outcomes of single-service strategies, as they have been established for welfare recipients and low-income adults. These findings have the potential to influence significantly future practice and policy.

- **The availability and use of resources** under a National Emergency Grant (NEG) and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (Trade) to design and implement a program of significant duration. These resources created appropriate education and training opportunities for these workers that were non-existent in programs funded through WIA Title I and II (Adult Basic Education), waiting lists for ABE programs and service intensity that does not align with UI eligibility being the primary issues. The examination of the role of NEG resources is particularly important if this aspect of the program is examined in conjunction with the opportunities created by TRADE certification of workers. This facilitated the opportunity to create intensive education and training programs that had the potential to make a real difference in building the skills of these workers. At the same time, workers were able to participate in these programs because they were able to enjoy UI benefits for an extended period of time.

² The evaluation framework builds on an original version developed by Johan Uvin of the Commonwealth Corporation (2003).

- **Acknowledgment of and efforts to accommodate cultural factors** in the design and implementation of the program and its curriculum. Attempts to address cultural issues included provision of intensive job readiness—in some cases in the workers' native language—to address inexperience and unfamiliarity with the job market; adoption of instructional methods appropriate to both non-literate and more highly educated learners, and the selection of industries targeted by the programs to be compatible with these immigrant workers' interests.
- **Involvement and collaboration among multiple stakeholders** in the workforce development and Chinatown communities. The extent of the collaboration had significant potential for enhancing system capacity to serve the Power-One and similar populations.
- **Involvement of a grassroots, community-based organization such as the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)** in enhancing worker involvement and retention in the program, and in the design and implementation. This issue may have important implications for future re-employment service practice in immigrant communities and elsewhere.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the overall project as well as each of these five main innovations, a multi-pronged approach was used, including analysis of process and outcome data, and contacts with stakeholder agencies and service providers at all levels. Workers were also contacted to learn how services met with expectations, and how well the program had assisted a very vulnerable population to adjust to the demands of the local labor market.

Overview of Report

The following section of this report describes the context for the Power-One project, the development and actual services provided, and the population. It also briefly describes the economic context in Boston during 2001–2003, an important back-drop to the project. Section III lays out the evaluation methodology.

Section IV reports on the main findings, integrating outcomes analysis with views provided by all project stakeholders. It first presents findings on employment outcomes for the group as a whole, by service mix and by participant characteristic, drawing comparisons to the employment status of these workers before their lay-off, and to those of participants of analogous programs in the city and region. Section IV then presents findings on program implementation and how well it assisted workers in making the transition from an "immigrant enclave" workplace to the mainstream labor market in Boston. The section provides a close-up look at the challenges workers and programs that serve them face in helping to effect this transformation. In this section, the report also looks at the extent to which the project itself had an impact on the local workforce development system and its capacity to meet the needs of similar groups of workers. It reviews innovations in the planning process, system coordination, collaboration, and advocacy—all of which involved multiple stakeholders.

Section V presents the main lessons of the evaluation, and makes initial recommendations as to how the experience of the Power-One project can help inform future programs to serve dislocated, limited English-proficient workers.

II. POWER-ONE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Key to determining how well these services worked, and why, is understanding the unique population, the stakeholders involved, and the fairly charged circumstances under which the project began.

Background

In April 2001 workers began contacting the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) and Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), complaining that they were being laid off and that their employer, Power-One International, was being unfair in its designation of severance packages and failing to properly compensate workers for accrued overtime and sick time. CPA, a 27-year old community organizing and advocacy organization, quickly realized that the entire workforce was to be laid off, and began organizing workers to demand an open negotiating process and fair severance packages. A worker representative committee was set up—a body that would continue representing the workers on training issues over the next two years. CPA and the workers organized pickets outside the factory, while GBLS filed unfair labor practice suits against Power-One for alleged harassment of workers asserting their right to collective action.

The state's Rapid Response unit and Boston's Office of Jobs and Community Services also reacted quickly to the plant shutdown. The state initiated direct contact with company executives, requesting, among other things, that they seek Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) status. With lay-offs occurring in three waves and key lay-off dates changing as the process unfolded, Power-One ultimately failed in its legal obligation to provide workers and the State proper notice of the shut-down, which would have allowed for more adequate time to plan and offer services to workers before they were turned out.

As the City and State began to plan for how training services would be provided, CPA also organized a demonstration at the State House, advocating for sufficient training funds. The group enlisted the support of organized labor, students and public officials, including Mayor Thomas Menino and U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, city councilors, and others.

With so many workers who had very limited English and familiarity with the unemployment system, JCS and CPA held large meetings with presentations by City staff, Boston's One-Stop Career Centers, Trade and labor representatives from the Rapid Response unit. These and other efforts during the summer and early fall of 2001 were designed to ensure the laid off workers could take advantage of the benefits available to them, and to keep momentum until training funds began to flow in late October 2001, six months after the first workers had lost their jobs.

Retraining Services

JCS became the lead planning and administrative agency, since Power-One was located in Boston and because JCS had experience and capacity in meeting the needs of limited English-speaking unemployed and dislocated workers. Staff there sought state and federal funding, and devised a plan to have all workers receive basic services through the city's three career centers, and ESL and skills training through a network of vendors. Ultimately, the program was funded under a National Emergency Grant sought by the city, and under the Trade Adjustment Act Program, which provides assistance to workers dislocated as a result of foreign competition.

The large number of workers, together with the fact that many spoke almost no English, prompted JCS to provide services in a way different from the norm. A bi-lingual project coordinator was contracted to help quickly ramp up a service provider network that lacked sufficient capacity to serve so many LED workers all at once, or, in some cases, even staff that could communicate with workers. (Ultimately, JCS was able to staff the project with a part-time, bi-lingual coordinator for two periods of about four months each. For the balance of the project, permanent JCS staff managed it.) The coordinator first assigned each of the 280 workers to one of the city's three career centers, a process normally driven by individual customer choice. Each worker was assigned a career counselor, and the centers were responsible for providing workers with information and access to unemployment benefits, TAA certification, career counseling and referrals to training and other support services. Counselors and other staff at the career centers had to get up to speed quickly on the different programs and accompanying paperwork.

Under the TAA status, workers qualified for extended unemployment benefits and training. They were eligible for up to 78 weeks of benefits and 104 weeks of training. Extended benefits (past the State's normal 30 weeks) were dependent on an individual's participation in re-training services. With their employment options severely limited, most workers required such intensive services, and likely could have benefited from more. Normally, City funding covers 26 weeks of ESOL or 20 weeks of skills training. Just a handful of customers each year is eligible for both.

For the design and implementation of actual training services, JCS turned to its network of English and occupational training providers,

which had long served the city's low-income immigrant communities. JCS ran a procurement process for English for Employment (EFE) courses and later collaborated with Commonwealth Corporation on a skills training procurement for the workers. Under both the Workforce Investment Act and normal Trade re-training procedures, laid-off workers normally would be referred to existing training programs, but JCS staff knew that the existing array of programs neither could handle the numbers nor accommodate the language levels. Training agencies were called upon to add new or additional English for Employment (EFE) classes that would include English, career planning development, case management, job search and job placement for the Power-One workers.

The Asian American Civic Association (AACA), International Institute of Boston (IIB), Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) and the YMCA were the four community-based organizations ultimately contracted to provide EFE courses, offering a total of eight courses over 18 months. Each course ran 26 weeks, 20 hours per week, for a total of roughly 520 instructional hours.

JCS also required the EFE vendors to assess and help assign workers to appropriate English services. Assessments are normally done by career centers, but JCS was aware that the centers lacked the tools and staff to assess workers with such low English levels. This not only taxed the vendors' capacity, it also required a high level of communication among career counselors, vendors and workers themselves—a level that most later agreed was not attained, leading to some confusion. In the weeks leading up to class start dates, vendors faced uncertainties around how many students they would have, and when funding sources would allow them to begin.

Once all appropriate clients were enrolled in EFE, JCS met with skills training providers to determine what occupations and industries were realistic options for the Power-One workers, and to what extent programs would and could adjust their entry requirements in order to serve this population. The feedback of providers ultimately would help shape the RFP issued by the state with JCS input. The vendor agencies made recommendations as to which industries and which type of training would best serve the client population. Some did relax their entrance requirements, while others beefed up the ESL portion of their skills trainings. They made additional adjustments, which are discussed in greater detail later in this report. All programs were responsible for providing job readiness and job search assistance and ultimately placing participants in full-time employment. Career counselors were responsible for ongoing career planning, referrals and placement. In trying to find the best skills training match for the workers, JCS also organized labor market

information sessions for the workers, and then conducted a survey of their occupational interests. Those students for whom group training was deemed inappropriate (either because of their interests or skill or language competency) were referred by their career counselors to existing training using an Individual Training Account (ITA).

Over 18 months, JCS administered three cycles of services, including eight EFE courses, six skills training courses via group contract, and other skills training courses via ITA. Table 1 shows the full range of trainings and vendors. In all, 94 percent of the 278 participants³ enrolled in EFE; 60 percent for a full year. One half of all participants received skills training. Among those who did not, many were still ineligible to enter a skills training program, even after a year of English. Just 16 participants, or 6 percent, went directly to training without EFE.

³ Two workers found jobs between the time they were assessed and services began.

Table 1: Program Services and Vendors

TRAINING	VENDOR
English for Employment	
EFE	Jewish Vocational Services
EFE	International Institute of Boston
EFE	Asian American Civic Assoc.
EFE	YMCA International Center
Skills Training (group)	
VESL/Culinary Arts Skills Training	Jewish Vocational Services
Hotel/Hospitality Industry Training Program	International Institute of Boston
Early Childhood Education Program	Action for Boston Comm. Action
Other Training (ITA)	
Electronics Technology Program	Bunker Hill Comm. College
Office Skills Training Prog.	Asian American Civic Assoc.
ESL & MS Office	YMCA Training, Inc.
Office Careers	One-with-One
Basic Computer Skill / MS-Office 2000	Insight Computer Training Center, Inc.
ESL/Keyboard/ Basic Comp. Skills/MS-Office 2000	Insight Computer Training Center, Inc.
Med. Billing/Med. Secretarial w/ GED Prep.	LARE Training Center: Lawrence
Maj. Appliances, Dom. & Comm. Ref. & A/C	Bay State School of Technology
Computer/Office Preparation for Employment	Operation A.B.L.E. of Greater Boston, Inc.
Electronics Technology	RETS Electronic Schools Inc.
Refrig., Heating, Ventilation, AC (RHVAC) Service Tech	RETS Electronic Schools Inc.
Oracle & Microsoft Solutions Developer	Boston Univ. Corp. Education Center
Administrative Assistant 2	Millenium Training Institute, Inc.
Computerized Accounting/ESL	Jewish Vocational Services
Intensive ESL Program	UMass Boston

Advocacy and Outreach

Throughout the course of the project, CPA staff and volunteers sustained the worker representative committee, which served to add a worker voice to discussions around training quality and helped to keep the broader worker community informed. CPA also provided the workers assistance with benefits, advocacy, and other forms of support on an as-needed basis.

Funding

The Power-One project cost approximately \$1,850,500 and was paid for by the U.S. Department of Labor under a National Emergency Grant (NEG) and the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program, and by the City's Neighborhood Jobs Trust (NJT). The NEG paid for services provided by the career centers, job readiness training and job search activities. TAA dollars supported language and occupational skills training. NJT contributed matching funds (\$50,000) that went toward JCS and career center staff time early on in the project. The average program cost per participant was \$6,609, and the average training cost (EFE and/or skills training) was \$4,098. According to JCS staff, these costs were competitive with other training and ESOL programs run by the City, particularly when the number of hours is taken into account.

Population

The former Power-One workers who received services were predominantly female (83 percent) Chinese immigrants (97 percent). Most (84 percent) were native Cantonese-speakers, with smaller numbers of Mandarin-, native-English- and Spanish-speakers.⁴ Their average age was 44, with 10 percent over the age of 55.

The workers had an average of a tenth-grade education, ranging from no schooling at all to graduate level study. Over half (56 percent) lacked a high school diploma, while about 10 percent had some college study. This range of formal education levels made for a diverse group of learners in the classroom: some program participants were not literate in their native language; others had studied English in school and, while unable to speak it, were familiar with seeing English on the page.

⁴ Five Latino workers received services. Three of them had limited English skills and were enrolled in EFE.

The Power-One workforce had functioned mainly in Chinese, with most workers using little or no English throughout the day. The workers who received re-employment services had very limited English language skills. At the time of their initial assessment, the average score assigned to the workers using the Student Performance Level (SPL) was under 2. (Figure 1 explains the scoring system.) As shown in Table 3, 35 individuals were deemed to have absolutely no English abilities (SPL = 0-.5), and 133 or nearly one-half the population scored a 1.5 or less.

Figure 1:
Student Performance Levels for English Language Ability

Student Performance Level (SPL) is an assessment method used by ESOL providers to describe a student's language ability in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; the ability to communicate with a native speaker; and readiness for employment. At level 0, an individual has "no ability whatsoever." At level 1 a learner is able to function only minimally in English, understand a few words or very simple phrases, speak just a few words and print out their own name. At level 3 an individual can "understand only simple learned phrases" and "handle routine, entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral communication and in which all tasks can be demonstrated." At level 5, an individual can also understand "short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly" and perform in "entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral communication but in which tasks can be demonstrated." A level of 10 describes "ability equal to a native speaker of the same socio-economic level."

Source: "Scoring the BEST Plus: Student Performance Level Descriptors," Center for Applied Linguistics, May 2003.

Prior to their lay-off at Power-One, the workers' average wage was \$8.60, though a full one-fourth of the workforce was earning \$6.75 (Massachusetts minimum wage) or less.⁵ Most workers (65%) were employed as assemblers, with an average wage of \$7.74. Other significant job categories were tester, quality control, and machine operator, all of which paid slightly higher wages.

Overall, male workers had slightly higher formal education levels and English language abilities than their female co-workers. Men also were earning \$1.24 more, on average, than women.

Table 2: Participant Demographics

	Male	Female	Overall
Number	49	231	280
Percent of total	17.5%	82.5%	100%
Age (avg.)	49	43	44
Age 55 or over	12	15	27
Highest Grade Completed (avg.)	11.3	9.7	9.9
English Level at Intake (avg.)*	2.3	1.8	1.9
Pre-Layoff Wage (avg.)	\$9.84	\$8.35	\$8.60

*n=259

Table 3: Starting English Level
(overall, female, male)

SPL*	Male	Female	Overall
0-.5	12%	13%	13%
1-1.5	31%	36%	35%
2-2.5	12%	23%	21%
3-3.5	10%	14%	14%
4-4.5	6%	4%	4%
5-5.5	2%	3%	3%
6+	8%	2%	3%
no data	18%	6%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

*SPLs are recorded only in whole or half numbers

5 One possible explanation for sub-minimum wage data is that workers reported to their career counselors their original starting wage, rather than their wage at the time of lay-off.

Economic Context

Local economic conditions were an important factor in the Power-One project, both in shaping the decisions as to what trainings to offer participants and in placements. The departure of Power-One from Boston came at a time when the national, state and local economies were going into recession. The plant closing was also part of broader trend of a shrinking manufacturing sector. Between January 2001 and the fall of 2003, the state lost 175,000 jobs, or 5.2 percent of total employment. The manufacturing sector experienced a 19.2 percent loss in the same period.⁶ In Boston, 20,186 jobs were lost between 2002 and 2003, 2,000 of them in manufacturing, accounting for 13 percent of employment in that sector.⁷

By 2002, nearly all sectors of the economy in Boston were feeling the effects of the recession. Following the events of September 11, 2001 jobs in tourism, financial services and other related areas were significantly scaled back, as demand for these services dropped off sharply. Unemployment rose to 6.5 percent by the third quarter of 2003,⁸ and unemployed residents were spending longer periods of time looking for work.

Unfortunately, the local economy hit bottom just as the former Power-One workers were hitting the streets. Competition for most jobs in Boston was high, particularly for entry-level service jobs in hotels, eating establishments, retail stores and financial institutions where most training programs had traditionally targeted their placement efforts. State records showed that "Administrative Support," and "Accommodation and Food Services" comprised two of the largest contributors to Boston unemployment insurance claims⁹, meaning that these industries were shedding jobs and in severe distress. Where there were openings, Power-One workers were vying for jobs against college graduates and others who had been laid off in other sectors or were otherwise over-qualified.

These conditions, together with the language and skill barriers facing the laid off workers, presented significant challenges to re-employment efforts.

6 Benchmarks, "Economic Currents: The State of the State Economy," Fall 2003, Volume 6, Issue 3.

7 "Regional Labor Market Information Profile: Boston 3rd Quarter 2003," Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, et al.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

III. METHODOLOGY

Worker experiences and views were captured through two focus groups and individual interviews. Bi-lingual interviewers met with 32 workers in all (14 individually), using three different languages and dialects. As community activists and professionals, the interviewers were familiar with the project, and with community and cultural issues specific to this population. Individuals were selected to participate in the focus groups and interviews using a stratified random sample design, and were generally representative of the overall population according to career center, training mix and provider, and current employment status. The sample was also representative by age, primary language and gender.

The experiences and views of staff of the many organizations involved in the project were also captured through interviews. In-person interviews were conducted with representatives of all three career centers, three of the four English for Employment providers (some that also provided skills training), one skills training provider, CPA, JCS, and the state Trade Program. In all, 25 individuals participated. In some cases, multiple staff members at one agency participated in an interview, with one group as large as

seven participants. Among the providers, interviews sometimes brought together skills training staff with ESL staff, providing them with an opportunity for reflection on a challenging project, and a chance to listen to the perspectives of their co-workers who may work in another area of the same agency.

Program outcomes were analyzed using data collected through the Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES), a comprehensive database to which all publicly funded workforce development service providers in Massachusetts must submit participant information. The analysis compares participation and retention, and educational (SPL) and employment outcomes (placement, wages, hours worked and benefits) by participant characteristics, type and mix of services; pre-layoff wage and occupation; lay-off date; and training industry focus. In some cases, data provided by the career centers or vendors on program participants is incomplete, making for certain minor inconsistencies in total counts across variables.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Processes and Outcomes

Program Participation

Worker participation levels were extremely high. Three hundred and seventy-nine workers were laid-off from Power-One in 2001. Three hundred and ten were assessed by the Career Centers; and 280 or 74 percent of the workforce received services. Of those who did not receive services,

some were ineligible for benefits because they were part-time or recent hires at Power-One, while others holding professional and some technical positions¹⁰ may have felt they did not need services. The Power-One participation rate was extremely high. According to Trade and NEG program staff, dislocated workers typically participate in these programs at a rate closer to 20-30 percent.

High participation levels can likely be attributed to the link between training participation and extended benefits, and to CPA's concerted efforts to keep the laid-off workers together as a group. "The organizing kept people together. These people had to be able to survive without a job. We told them it was worth it to do the training," said a CPA staff member. CPA worked with JCS and the state agencies to lead workers through the process of connecting with dislocated worker services as a group. CPA helped to arrange meetings at which state and local officials explained cash and health benefits, as well as the training available. Jointly, CPA and JCS staff and volunteers translated and helped the workers fill out forms; the JCS coordinator physically escorted groups to career centers to register for services.

While under other circumstances laid-off workers might be provided with information about their options and resources, no single organization is there to actively encourage and assist them to actually take advantage of those services. Some laid-off workers simply may not need re-training services, but many do. This is a particularly important point as the demographics of Trade and NEG projects include more and more Limited English Proficient (LEP) workers. Conducting outreach in workers' native language around availability and access to services will be increasingly critical.

Program Retention

Overall program retention was also extremely high, with just two to three percent of participants dropping out each cycle. This retention rate is notable, according to City and State officials. Here too, the fact that the flow of UI benefits was dependent on one's participation in training was a likely motivator for students to stay in class. Participants appear to have made rational calculations about their relative financial standing while in training with benefits versus being out in the labor market.

¹⁰ Many technical workers did receive services, including individuals in engineering, engineering technician, and designer positions.

Employment and education outcomes

General findings

By January 2004, just over half (52%) of program participants had secured new employment.¹¹ As Table 4 shows, their average replacement wage was \$9.29 per hour, an eight percent improvement over pre-layoff wages at Power-One. Male earnings increased four percent and female earnings increased nine percent, although men were, on average, still earning \$1.15 more than women. The average increase in English skills was 1.8 levels.

Securing better replacement wages was an achievement, for both the re-employed workers and the programs that served them. As Table 8 on the following page shows, laid off workers served by federal programs typically end up earning less than they did in their former jobs.

However, upon closer examination, other measures of job quality—including total earnings—declined for some Power-One workers. At Power-One, all workers for whom data was reported worked full-time at 40 hours per week. After placement, just 73 percent of those whose hours were reported were working full-time. Hours worked were not reported for 21 percent of those placed in employment, although this is a key reporting requirement for training providers and career centers.

At Power-One, nearly all workers (97.5 percent) who received re-employment services had full benefits.¹² In their placement jobs, 61 percent of those who reported had "full" benefits (medical, pension and social security), while nearly one-third of participants had no benefits at all. Benefits status was not reported for 21 percent of those placed in employment.

Table 4: Pre-Layoff vs Placement Wages

	Male	Female	Overall
Pre-Layoff Wage (avg.)	\$9.84	\$8.35	\$8.60
Placement Wage	\$10.21	\$9.06	\$9.29
Percent Change	4%	9%	8%

Table 5: Hours Worked per Week in Placement Jobs

	#	%
Up to 24 hours	14	12%
25-34 hours	17	15%
35+ hours (full-time)	83	73%
Hours reported	114	79%
Hours not reported	31	21%
Total	145	100%

Table 6: Benefits in Placement Jobs

	#	%
Medical, Pension, SS*	65	57%
Medical Only	9	8%
Pension, SS	3	3%
None	37	32%
Reported	114	79%
Not reported	31	21%
TOTAL	145	100%

* SS=Social Security

11 See Footnote #1 for explanation of how placement rate has and may continue to rise.

12 MOSES data does not note pre-lay-off benefits, however we know that Power-One provided benefits after six months on the job. Of the 280 workers in the program, just 7 had been employed six months or less at lay-off.

In assessing the Power-One program, it might be helpful to compare results to those of similar programs. However, finding comparable programs serving comparable populations is difficult. Table 7 shows that, when compared to WIA participants in Boston, Power-One participants overall did worse than WIA skills training participants, which included native and non-native English speakers. They found jobs at roughly the same rate as WIA non-native English speakers who took just EFE. The Power-One EFE-only group did worse than the Boston EFE-only group, probably because their English levels were lower. Table 8 shows that, com-

pared to other Trade and NEG programs, Power-One fell short on placement rates, but, as noted above, did well on replacement wages. Trade and NEG data, however, include all dislocated workers, not just LEPs, who have greater barriers to employment.

Employment results on Power-One have been less than initially anticipated, but the story of successes and shortcomings is far more complex than numbers tell. Program representatives and participants alike pointed to the low-level English language skills and the poor economy as the main reasons for difficulties with re-employment.

Table 7: Similar Data from Local Programs

	Number Served	Entered Employment	Previous Wage (avg.)	Placement Wage (avg.)
WIA Adult-All (FY02)	397	68%*	\$10.25	\$12.12*
WIA EFE only (FY02)	78	55%	\$8.75	\$10.03
Power-One: All (FY02 & 03)	280	52%	\$8.60	\$9.29
Power-One: EFE only (FY02 & 03)	262	38%		

*Entered employment rate and placement wage DO NOT include EFE participants.

Source: Office of Jobs and Community Services

Table 8: Trade Program and NEG Goals and Performance

	Entered Employment	Wage Replacement*	Limitations on Comparison
Trade Program			Programs serve both native and non-native English speakers, as well as low- to highly-skilled workers.
National Goal	78%	90%	
National Performance	63%	75%	
New England Region Performance	75%	84%	
NEG			
National Goals	80%	90%	
Power-One Program	52%	108%	

Source: MA Division of Career Services

Outcomes by participant characteristics

This section reports on how different sub-groups were served by the Power-One program. Here, we pay particular attention to wage and education gains, rather than actual wage and SPL totals, since these are the best indicators of how well the program served one group versus others.

Education

Workers with a high school or college degree were significantly more likely to find employment than were their less-educated co-workers. These workers also were typically on the younger side as well. High-school graduates also were paid slightly better than their less-educated co-workers while they were at Power-One, and had a bit higher return on their education once they had improved their English and found new jobs, though not much. College graduates earned better wages before and after lay-off, yet they were the only group to see a wage decrease in their new jobs, suggesting that their credentials lost value as they went from a predominantly Chinese-speaking workplace to the general labor market. Those workers who had a 6th-11th grade education (also the largest group) saw the strongest wage increase as they improved their English.

Table 9: Placement Rate and Earnings by Education Level

Highest Grade Completed	# customers	Placement Rate	Wage Before Layoff (avg.) (n=279)	Wage at Placement (avg.) (n=145)	% Wage Change
0-5	24	42%	\$8.35	\$8.40	1%
6-11	133	42%	\$7.88	\$8.69	10%
12-15	106	65%	\$8.79	\$9.21	5%
16+	16	63%	\$14.29	\$13.24	-7%
Total	279	52%	-	-	-

Table 10: Placement Rate and Wage by Post-EFE English Level (avg.)* (n=248)

Post-EFE SPL	0-1			2-3			4-5			6+		
	#	% placed	Wage	#	% placed	Wage	#	% placed	Wage	#	% placed	Wage
Overall	25	20%	\$7.45	120	54%	\$8.44	84	60%	\$8.90	19	58%	\$10.22
Male	5	40%	\$6.87	18	67%	\$8.66	14	71%	\$10.01	3	0%	-
Female	20	15%	\$7.83	102	52%	\$8.39	70	57%	\$8.62	16	69%	\$10.22

* SPL measured after completion of EFE only. For participants who went on to skills training, levels may have increased.

English proficiency

As expected, better English skills by the end of the program also resulted in better chances of getting a job and higher wages.¹³ Table 10 indicates that placement rates and wages are both strongly correlated to participants' English levels. Those workers who were not able to improve their English beyond a very beginner level had the worst labor market outcomes.

While workers with better English skills had stronger employment gains, some agency staff said they believed English classes were most valuable for those at the bottom. "It's not so visible, this investment. But overall, it gives the most return on investment. Otherwise these people would be on welfare and other subsidies. ...I think the project has been very successful, although the results may not show it," said an EFE provider.

As Table 11 indicates, workers who started the program with the lowest language skills had the greatest language gains. As noted above, the average improvement in English was 1.8 levels, but members of the lowest group, who began with an SPL between 0 and .5, had a larger improvement (2.4). The small number of workers who started at higher levels had smaller gains. Unfortunately, data was incomplete for 18 percent of workers.

Table 11: Increase in Language Skills by Starting SPL

Starting SPL*	#	Increase (n=243)
0-.5	35	2.4
1-1.5	93	1.8
2-2.5	53	1.7
3-3.5	31	1.7
4-4.5	7	1.2
5-5.5	7	1.4
6+	5	0.5
incomplete data	50	-
Total/Overall	281	1.8

*SPLs are recorded only in whole or .5 numbers

Program staff note that progress is slow at the lowest levels, and rate of advancement is not uniform. Explains a career center staffer: "After 6 months, a person can usually move up 2 levels. Over the course of a year, going from 2 to 5 is a lot. But if they start at zero, they may only advance one level. Six months means nothing if they're starting at zero." Interviewees with very low English skills also noted that the material offered in EFE class was hard for them to absorb.

Some skills training representatives believed that those who made most productive use of the Power-One programs were younger and had less employment background than some of their older co-workers in the program. Data indicate that these women had slightly higher education levels as well. They may have had a better ability to study and use a text, and were more inclined to take risks, including practicing their English and going on job interviews. Their older counterparts were less willing to use their English, to speak for themselves and ultimately to go out and seek a job on their own. Another career center representative summed it up this way: "Fifty-two weeks of EFE is a lot. For those who knew some English, it opened up more opportunities. Especially for the young women. They learn fast."

¹³ Unfortunately English levels were measured only before and after EFE services. This does not capture likely improvements in language skills that occurred during skills training.

Outcomes by type, mix and intensity of services

Both longer periods of EFE and the combination of EFE and skills training enhanced employment outcomes, indicating that greater service duration pays off. Table 12 shows that placement rates were higher for those participants who went through any type of skills training than for those who just had EFE. They were significantly higher for those who went through EFE and skills training under a group contract. Table 13, which shows outcomes by cycle, also helps to illustrate the true impact of skills training.

Greater improvements in language skills also are attributable to duration of EFE services. As Table 13 shows, those who took two cycles of EFE (approximately 1,000 hours over one year) had significantly greater gains than those who took just one cycle (approximately 500 hours over six months).

Table 12: Placement Rate by Service Mix

	total customers	customers placed	placement rate
EFE:	139	53	38%
EFE+ITA:	53	33	62%
EFE+Group Skills Training	70	49	70%
ITA:	16	8	50%
Total	278	143	

Table 13: Placement and Wage Outcomes by Training Cycle

Exit Program	Customers	Highest Grade	Pre SPL ^a	Post SPL ^a	Placement Rate	Pre-Layoff Wage ^b	Placement Wage ^b	Wage Change
1st Cycle								
EFE	14	10	2.0	2.2	50%	\$7.35	\$8.50	16%
ITA	16	14	n/a	n/a	50%	\$12.14	\$12.55	3%
2nd Cycle								
EFE+EFE	126	9	1.3	2.7	37%	\$7.66	\$7.63	0%
EFE+Group	42	10	2.4	4.2	67%	\$8.05	\$9.17	14%
EFE+ITA	39	12	2.3	4.4	64%	\$9.36	\$10.09	8%
3rd Cycle								
EFE+EFE+Group	27	9	1.7	3.4	78%	\$7.42	\$7.97	7%
EFE+EFE+ITA	14	9	2.7	4.2	64%	\$10.63	\$9.92	-7%
Total	278							

Notes

a- N=242 (SPL data includes only on those participants for whom both pre- and post-program SPL is available)

b- N=129 (Wage data includes only those participants who were placed AND for whom pre-layoff and placement wages are available.)

Participants who went through group skills training had the highest placement rates, and those for whom group skills training was preceded by two cycles of EFE had the greatest earnings gains.

Figure 2: Skills Training Impact

The impact of group skills training is clear when we compare outcomes for all participants who had a full year of EFE. Sixty percent of the entire service population (167) took two cycles, or one year, of EFE.

Group "A," represented in Table 13 as "EFE + EFE," consisted of 113 participants who began their classes at SPL 1.3, and ended at 2.7. From there, this group went out to find a job with no additional training and had the worst labor market outcomes: Very low placement (34 percent), the lowest placement earnings for those employed.

Group "B," referred to in the table as "EFE + EFE + Group," consisted of 27 participants who began their classes at SPL 1.7 and ended at 3.4—less than one level higher than Group A. They also had roughly the same formal education level. This group entered group skills training at that point and were twice as likely to become employed. Their pre-lay-off wages were similar to the group above, but those who got jobs ended up seeing an average eight percent increase.

Lower English levels of Group A may have prevented them from entering skills training or finding a job. However, these findings suggest that if those who took two cycles of EFE had gone on to group training, rather than seeking a job at that point, they would have been twice as likely to find a job and see a small wage increase.

Nearly one-quarter of all participants received training using an ITA. These individuals had somewhat higher education and English levels from the start. Yet overall, they had more difficulty finding a job than those who went through group skills training. The largest group of them (39), who did one cycle of EFE prior to receiving training, had the best placement rate (64 percent) among this group, and saw an eight percent wage increase.

One final group that did reasonably well following program services were the 26 workers who began at fairly low levels (average SPL 2), had just one cycle of EFE, and, while still eligible for additional services, chose to seek employment. Half of this group found jobs, at wages 16 percent higher than their previous jobs. Some program operators observed that this group may have had more motivation or more pressing financial needs, causing them to test their luck in the labor market rather than enrolling in more training.

Half (139) of all participants did one or two English courses and then began a job search, with no skills training. Reasons for why more did not enter skills training at that point varied. All of the individuals interviewed who did not take a skills training course indicated that they had wanted to. They said they were unable to qualify for the program of their choice, and/or that there were insufficient slots available. Focus group participants expressed similar frustrations regarding training availability. JCS staff said that the primary reasons for workers not advancing to training were either that they fell short of training entrance requirements due to their limited language skills, or that by the time they could become eligible, some workers lacked sufficient unemployment benefits to support training. The latter could have been a problem particularly for those workers laid off in the earliest wave. In either case, given the evident employment and wage returns on skills training, this finding is significant. Had more workers gone to skills training, outcomes might have been stronger.

Participant Transformation Process

Navigating a new labor market and workforce development system

Previous labor market experience

When they were laid off from Power-One, the workers found that although they had been employed for many years, they had very little to draw on that would be useful in finding a job in the local labor market. Many of them had never worked anywhere else before in the United States. On average, they had worked at the plant for just under five years. They had come to this country with a wide range of professional and work experience (from farmer to doctor, storeowner to school teacher) but here they were factory workers because, for the most part, that was what was available to individuals with limited English skills. Among former Power-One workers interviewed, for example, none had worked in manufacturing in their home countries, but of those who had worked before in the U.S., several had worked in a manufacturing setting. The exception to this was that some professionals, such as engineers, were working in their actual profession at Power-One.

The workers had had little or no experience actually looking for work, either in the U.S. or at home. Nearly all of those interviewed said a friend or relative already working there had referred them to Power-One. In many cases, the friend or relative would bring home an application for them to fill out, and then take it back to the supervisor. The applicant would still need to go for an interview, but frequently it would be conducted by a Chinese-speaking supervisor and the selection process was not rigorous. At home in China, as Chinese American professionals staffing the Power-One services explained, persons who had attended higher education or professional training were simply assigned to a workplace, omitting the need for a job search.

The Power-One plant had been a comfortable environment for non-English speakers. It had not, however, helped prepare them for any sort of work beyond the plant walls. Among interviewees, over half said they spoke no English on the job at all. Others were required to speak English with specific individuals (to a supervisor, to a "sales representative," to direct reports or co-workers who were Spanish speaking), or for specific tasks, such as to operate a machine ("high" "low" "on" "off" "stop."). One woman said that reading the instructions printed in English on her machine was the one language requirement.

Expectations

When they were laid off, the workers had grave concerns about what kind of work they would find and how they would support their families. Some said they felt afraid and directionless. Most were aware that jobs like those at Power-One, in which they did not need English skills, were practically non-existent. Some believed they could find another manufacturing job, but then realized that that was not the case. A couple of workers said they knew from the start they did not want to return to electronics manufacturing jobs.

In general, the workers had modest expectations for re-employment. They hoped to secure jobs in a factory, a Chinese restaurant, a hotel, or in an office doing data entry or accounting. Half said they did not anticipate earning more than \$8 per hour, although they had been earning a bit more than that at Power-One. One woman noted that she wouldn't have even contemplated the prospect of getting a job that was better, or paid higher wages than what she had at Power-One.

All of the workers interviewed said that they recognized and were grateful for the opportunity the program provided to them to learn English and prepare for the future. While devastating, the lay-off did have its advantages in that way.

How replacement jobs measure up

During interviews, the eight (of 14) workers who had found new jobs were asked how they compared them to their old jobs at Power-One. While this data is undoubtedly thin, it does provide some helpful insight into how workers feel they are faring, and what they value in the workplace. Two felt their current job was better than the previous one, four felt they were now worse off, and two had mixed opinions. Most were earning less than what they had anticipated upon lay-off, and all but one were earning less than what they earned at Power-One. Although this wage loss is not supported by the overall program data (on average workers who obtained a new job saw a slight wage increase), it is notable that the workers placed a high value on non-cash aspects to their new jobs.

Three-quarters of those who were working spoke English on the job. The other two worked in all-Chinese-speaking establishments. For all workers, being required to speak English on the job was positive. Noting that they would eventually like to find a better job, they felt that practicing English at work was a good investment. Here is how one worker, now earning \$1.20 less per hour, set the balance sheet:

"I feel that this job is definitely worse than the job at Power-One. The wage is lower, the staff is very unsupportive and the working conditions are worse than Power-One. Most of the time I feel that my co-workers are taking advantage of me because of the way I speak English. The advantage of this job is that it provides me with the opportunities to speak English with the customers and my co-workers and supervisor."

Another worker who was earning more now said that while the location was inconvenient and the responsibilities greater, "...at this job I learned to be patient, to have good self-esteem, and not to be shy when speaking to co-workers" and customers.

Some workers missed having the discretion, full-time hours and full benefits they had had at Power-One. In their new jobs, they generally appreciated not having to work overtime, and, in one case, having advancement opportunities. A woman working in an entry-level customer service job for a large corporation said that not having to do physically demanding labor or work overtime, and having better benefits and advancement potential, made her current job better than Power-One, even though she was earning \$.50 less per hour. A worker now employed at a Chinese restaurant where overtime is often required but not paid said that at Power-One she had had more control over whether she worked overtime or not. For her, things now are clearly worse. She earns \$1,000 per month.

Coping with transition

Program staff also said that, in hindsight, they wished the Power-One project had been better able to address the emotional and other personal issues related to the workers' loss of employment. Losing a job is a traumatic experience. Facing the challenge of going from a mono-lingual workplace, where one worked among mainly compatriots, to a mainstream job in an English-speaking workplace was another difficult transition. Yet the Power-One services focused on English, training and job placement. As one former counselor in the project explained, *"The customers didn't even know*

how to express their needs. They ended up in programs where they couldn't say what they needed." Workshops and clinical counseling through career centers or the state's Rapid Response has been scaled back in recent years, and are not offered in Chinese anyway. With linguistic competency thin throughout the system, and career centers and training vendors focused on training and employment, some of the emotional, personal and family issues associated with job loss and job transition went unattended.

As the workforce development system must respond increasingly to the needs of LEP dislocated workers, these challenges will persist. Either the Rapid Response network or the career centers and training programs, or both, will have to deepen their ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent counseling and other support services.

Independence and agency in the labor market

The scope of the Power-One program did not include post-placement services, and given the poor labor market conditions and the low-level English skills of most participants, basic job placement was the goal. With nearly half the workers still unemployed at the close of 2003, however, and many others hoping to improve on their entry-level jobs, it is critical for these workers to understand the labor market and have a sense of agency within it.

In response to specific questions about their career plans, interviewees appeared to have little specific knowledge about how they might move ahead (although they were familiar with job search techniques).

They felt they would need to improve their English skills, and some said they would need to network and get referrals from friends. Just two interviewees provided specific information regarding more advanced positions in their new fields (child care and health services), and the type of training they would need to obtain them.

In addition to knowing what steps to take to gain additional training and skills, workers need to feel they have some control, and the ability to act on their own behalf. Some JCS, career center and provider agency staff raised serious questions and disagreements about the extent to which the service delivery had promoted dependence or independence among the workers. These issues are closely tied to how culture and political advocacy figured into the Power-One project. First, as noted in the previous section, the Power-One workers were by and large an immigrant population that had spent considerable time in the United States but had little English language ability or experience with the labor market. While they had strong community networks and had worked hard, they were strikingly ill equipped to plan and execute a job search at the time of their lay-off.

Second, the agencies involved not only told the workers which benefits and services they were legally entitled to; they also assisted them in connecting with those services. CPA and the JCS staff were aware that the workers would be extremely challenged by language and cultural gaps if they tried to secure available health, monetary and training benefits on their own. Thus they helped the workers fill out forms and escorted them to career centers. These strategies were successful in connecting the workers to the system and addressing their economic and training needs. CPA's early organizing efforts

were also successful in showing the workers they could prevail through collective action. Some program staff wondered if the overall approach--as implemented by JCS, the career centers, training programs and CPA--did enough to promote independence and a sense of agency among individual workers themselves. There are, after all, many aspects of employment and career advancement in particular that are driven by the individual worker him or herself. One career counselor reflected on it this way:

After the initial meetings and getting people into services] ...the expectation was for handholding. It put us in an odd position. As a career counselor...I believe in empowerment. After they learn something once, they will go on to do it themselves. But they don't. Unless you tell them, they don't do it. That was part of the problem with job search....I saw the problem, but I didn't have enough time to think about what to do. We did do sessions to help people think about next steps. I would have done more of that.

JCS staff and providers point out the limits of career development services in a program so heavily focused on re-employment. "The goal of quickly placing displaced workers into ESL and skills training is not always conducive to good career counseling," noted a JCS staff member. These findings and ongoing questions suggest a need to place a greater emphasis on career planning, and perhaps even on post-placement services with efficient placement into training and jobs. In addition, regular assessment of labor market knowledge should be integrated into future services and evaluations.

Barriers to employment

Among the six individuals still unemployed, four said they were still receiving job search assistance through their most recent Power-One training provider. Two said they were currently enrolled in English courses at other locations.

"I am in desperate need of a job," said one older man, who said his applications have gone unanswered. "I am willing to do any job as long as someone gives me the opportunity."

They felt that their lack of English competency, marketable skills, and, in some cases, age, kept them from getting a job. Nearly every person also mentioned the poor economy, and many cited transportation as a significant barrier to employment. Some interviewees noted that manufacturing firms were leaving the area; heading either overseas or to the suburbs, making jobs inaccessible to urban workers. The workers also felt that they lacked connections and the ability to get referrals from friends, as they had with Power-One.

With their unemployment benefits long exhausted (most by the close of 2002), workers who had not found work again were being supported by spouses, children, siblings and other relatives. One woman said she and her husband, also a former Power-One employee, had been able to save a small amount of the benefits they had received. Another said that she sometimes worked temporary, part-time jobs to get by.

Program responsiveness to participant needs and interestsTraining quality

The agencies involved had different degrees of experience working with similar populations. Some had next to no prior service to Asian Americans, or lacked experience providing the particular services they did to large numbers of limited English speakers. Others had significant previous experience specifically with laid-off Chinese workers. Yet the fact that every agency struggled to find appropriate teaching methods, staff allocations, and program design in order to successfully serve the Power-One workers suggests the need to examine more carefully the trends, responses and ultimately the development of actual strategies and capacity.

Discussions with program graduates offer valuable insight into the quality of the employment and training services they received. They had different views on how well the career centers and career counselors had assisted people in accessing the right training and seeking employment, on the quality and curricula of EFE and skills training programs, and on the nature and value of job search assistance from all three career centers.

Career center services

At their assigned career centers, workers valued staff that was stable (stayed in their jobs), and that could communicate with them in their native language (particularly counselors). Most participants spoke highly of the assistance they had received at career centers, but some said they were frustrated by staff turnover (although this did not seem to trouble them if it occurred at training agencies) and by counselors that gave them either wrong information or recommendations they did not agree with. Those that reported difficulties with their career counselors found it hard to seek recourse within the career center system.

One career center representative observed that participants who received the most information about their options, the labor market, and job search, had already and would continue to fare best in the labor market. This was a result of good career counseling, and good coordination between career center staff and service providers.

Assessments

Participants and staff alike expressed frustration with the assessment process. The assessment phase was the first encounter, and the first challenge the EFE providers had related to the project. Early on, it was determined that career centers would be unable to conduct assessments because they did not have capacity to do them at such a low level.

The EFE providers did assessments, but most agreed with the workers that it was a fairly chaotic and sometimes imprecise process. Some workers were assessed in more than one location, and some vendors found it difficult to encourage the workers to

use what little language ability they did have in order to be properly assessed. Participants said that if they were deemed to be inappropriate for the level of classes being offered at the vendor site where they were tested, they had to go and be re-assessed somewhere else. This was cumbersome. They also felt that some individuals were not placed in classes appropriate to their level, making for large disparities in English proficiency levels within classes.

English and Skills Training

Workers felt that being laid off from Power-One had an advantage in that it provided them the opportunity to learn more English and new skills. Nearly all research participants felt that the English classes had opened up new opportunities for them. Half of the interviewees said they believed their English had improved significantly as a result of the EFE and skills training services they received, while nearly half said it had improved a little. All said they felt comfortable using English in the grocery store, though a lesser number (10 of the 14) said they felt comfortable using English in a job interview and on the phone. Overall, the program had, in their view, prepared them for a job.

Participants said that EFE programs had taught them how to find a job: how to prepare and use a resumé, how to go on an interview, how to network, etc. Not surprisingly, though, they felt that EFE programs were less effective in helping them actually get a job.

Regarding skills training courses, students preferred classes that were long enough for them to absorb the material. Those who had exposure to them also cited simulated work environments and internships as highly valuable in giving them a real understanding of the work and a chance to practice their English. Some students who had only taken EFE classes said that the worst problem with skills programs was the dearth of them. They had been unsuccessful in entering training programs, either because their English was not strong enough or because enrollment was limited.

EFE and skills training providers reported on a host of cultural, language, background, and social factors that surfaced during the project, some of them related to the fact that they were, for the first time, operating classes for an exclusively Chinese-speaking clientele. First, they were teaching large groups of students with very low English skills. Existing course designations did not make sense with this group—for example "level 1" became "level 1a" and "level 1b." Also, since as part of the EFE curriculum they were charged with teaching job readiness, some providers found it necessary to deliver this portion in Chinese. Bi-lingual staff were needed for job readiness and job search activities for much of the population. Some providers also enlisted tutors to give students extra language support.

Second, there were wide disparities in formal education levels. Some students were not literate in their native language, meaning that teachers had to rely less on traditional materials. "Our teaching strategies were somewhat alien to the students," said an educator involved with the program. "We had to do more activities without putting print in front of them." Other students had studied at the college level, and were very comfortable

using texts and being in the classroom. These students even demonstrated English writing and reading skills, but were unable to communicate orally.

Third, with concentrated groups of Chinese speakers in the program, instructors and others were challenged by the workings of a close-knit group that often appeared to operate with a "group mentality." Most program staff had not worked with a single-language group before, meaning that it was easier to maintain English as the dominant language in the classroom. This population, too, comprised of former co-workers, many of whom knew each other. A spokesperson would quickly arise, and some program staff said they found themselves surprisingly unaware of what their other students felt, thought or knew.

A few EFE participants who were in mixed language classes said they felt that their teachers had unevenly enforced rules around students' use of native languages in class.

Finally, teachers, job developers and job counselors said that they found the Power-One students less confident and more reluctant to take risks than others with whom they had worked. They said this affected students' willingness to practice their English, go on job interviews, and sometimes simply communicate with program staff. One counselor called this "shyness." She said, "It affects their selling themselves in an interview. Americans' view is that if you think you can do something, say you can. If [the Power-One workers] think for a minute that they're going to fail, it's better not to have tried at all." Another counselor noted the lack of confidence due to being an immigrant and unfamiliarity with social norms in communication and other areas.

Job search

Participants praised staff that knew their trade had a plan for providing services, and that were fair. They believed that skills programs, which used more targeted, tangible approaches to job placement, were more effective than EFE programs in placing students.

In addition to some of the new teaching strategies described above, agencies found that they needed to modify some of their approaches to training and securing employment for the Power-One students.

In at least one case, an agency refocused its training to prepare workers for lower-grade occupations that required less English. Program graduates were placed with a similar set of employers in the same industry as other graduates, but in lower-level jobs. Another program took a similar approach, broadening its pool of employer contacts to include firms that offered lower-skill (and lower wage) jobs.

What participants expressed as helping them most in securing work was direct contacts and interaction with employers, through internships and targeted applications. When staff and trainees knew their field, and when job developers were aware of participants' interests, good connections were made. In contrast, participants said that more random approaches, including going to job fairs and sending out résumés cold, were less effective. Some participants said that job developers sometimes lacked a real plan for how to help them find work. As one man put it, going from one job site to the next as a group was not only ineffective, but it made them "feel like bums." Temporary jobs also sometimes

proved to be a source of unfulfilled expectations and conflict between participants and their job developers. For those not yet employed, they valued still feeling welcome at the agency.

Job development staff at EFE and skills training agencies alike found that the workers' strongest asset was that they were determined, hardworking and reliable. They learned this through their experiences with their students and used it as a selling point with employers.

Difficulties with placements aroused a sense of distrust among some participants. They said that programs were handling too many participants and should be more accountable. They felt that programs ought to be responsible for placing all workers in their programs, not just enough to satisfy the placement requirements.

While this evaluation was not designed in such a way as to prove or disprove the effectiveness of the program design elements discussed in this section, these observations by program participants and staff are helpful in considering which program models and components are effective and how they can be improved upon. They also demonstrate the challenges of meeting the linguistic, cultural, and employment needs of dislocated limited English proficient workers. Program planners and project staff alike may find documentation of this experience helpful in considering future program design.

Industry and occupational focus of training

Group training courses were offered in the fields of culinary arts and hospitality, and for childcare teacher's assistant. Significant numbers of participants were also referred to office and computer skills programs, using ITAs. These selections were made by JCS, in consultation with the career centers, EFE and skills training providers, and a handful of employers. Results of a survey asking workers which industries and occupations interested them were also used. (This process is described more fully in the section below on Planning.)

Interviews with workers and program staff suggest that most occupational training and job placements did not relate to previous work, with the exception of teachers' assistant course and some professionals trained using ITAs. They did reflect the current realities of the regional labor market, the capacities of local training vendors, and what the workers said they wanted to do, given a set of choices. *"There had to be jobs available at the entry level, there had to be interest, and there had to be a training provider that could do it,"* explained a JCS staff member. Training had to be at very low English comprehension level, and had to combine skills with ESOL. The staff sought realistic options, weighing the degree of risk individual workers could or should assume. *"We were struggling with wanting to broaden what people could do, and not setting them up for failure,"* he said. *"We heard both the need for more options, and need for a reality check."*

Some choices were ultimately better than others, in terms of the opportunities and wages they offered. Tables 14 and 15 show the industries and occupations in which former Power-One workers found jobs. Most of them shifted to other industries, where new skills were required of them. Table 14 shows that of the 145 individuals who began working again, a fairly surprising number (22) did find manufacturing jobs in the area. The majority entered retail (53) and service jobs in areas such as hotels and motels (17), health services (17), and education (7). The largest single group (19 percent) gained employment in restaurants, most of them as cooks, food prep workers, and buspersons. Among the largest job categories, wages were weakest in retail jobs, and strongest in housekeeping, where union wage standards have a positive impact industry-wide in Boston.

Table 14: Replacement Jobs by Industry

Industry*	Number
Manufacturing	22
Electronic & other	10
electrical equipment & components	
All others	9
Wholesale trade	1
Retail	53
Food stores	20
Eating & drinking places	27
All others	6
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	5
Services	57
Hotels & motels	17
Business services	5
Health services	17
Educational services	7
Engineering, accounting, research,	5
management & rel. svcs.	
All others	6
Public Administration	1
Industry not recorded	6
TOTAL	145

* Subcategories included for 5 or more individuals only

Table 15: Replacement Jobs by Occupation

Occupation*	Number	Average Wage
Cashier/retail sales	5	\$6.96
Food prep worker	26	\$8.09
Busperson	5	\$8.62
Assembler	11	\$8.90
Cook	7	\$9.02
File clerk & data entry	11	\$9.74
Housekeeper	9	\$10.67
All others	42	-
Occupation not recorded	29	-
Total	145	

* Includes only categories with 5 or more individuals

Although poor program reporting on occupations makes an analysis difficult, Table 16 shows that some conclusions can be drawn regarding how the group did in the types of jobs for which they were trained. The largest discrepancy between trainings and placements is in office jobs. Career center staff, in particular, said that from the beginning they had reservations about referring their clients to office and computer skills programs. They worried that the programs were simply preparing workers for jobs they could not get, due to their lack of English competency. The childcare/early education field also proved less successful, again due in part to language requirements in that field.

Culinary arts and hospitality proved to be safer bets. These fields, noted career counselors, were perhaps not as glamorous in the minds of the workers, but at least they got the participants into a work environment and gave them options. A review of placement data indicates that up to about ten percent of the restaurant and retail jobs were in Chinese businesses, most of them in restaurants. In this case, it is likely that gains in English competency made through the program will diminish.

Interestingly, very few workers expressed interest in health care work--particularly direct care positions--but 17 workers entered jobs in this industry, mostly in administrative, clerical and laboratory posts. JCS and career center staff expressed some disappointment that they were not able to take greater advantage of opportunities in the health care industry, as that industry has remained more stable through the recession and offers entry-level positions, some with growth potential.

Finally, although there was no training offered geared toward manufacturing, a significant number of participants secured work in this field. Many of them took no skills training, or secured jobs unrelated to the training they took. One had office skills training and got a clerical position, and another took electrical training and secured a skilled technician job.

Table 16: Ratio of training to placements, by occupational group

	Percent in training	Percent of placement jobs in this field*	Ratio
Culinary Arts	24	28	+
Hospitality	12	13	+
Child care, teacher's assistant	11	3	-
Office, accounting, computer	38	16	-

* Total number (n=116) excludes jobs in which occupation was not reported

Organization and System Change

The Planning Process

In the face of significant pressure driven by time, numbers and tremendous needs, JCS led a thoughtful, efficient planning process. Despite a legal obligation to do so, the company provided the City and State with no warning that it would be closing down. First to hear of the lay-off from workers in early Spring 2001 were CPA and GBLs, and that was after the first workers had already been dismissed. After the fact there was little recourse for the workers or the City other than to quickly solicit emergency funds and Trade certification, and to start putting the workers through a workforce development system that was largely unprepared for them.

Stakeholders involved early on in dealing with the Power-One workers expressed the intense pressure they felt as a result of the large numbers of workers and the fact that they had a limited window in which to get people into training. *"It was a scramble,"* said one City staffer, *"trying to make sure people didn't lose benefits and be able to take advantage of the training opportunity. You're trying to implement this stuff on the fly, and meanwhile people's benefits clock is ticking."* Even with this scramble, some workers had to wait six months from the time they were laid off before they could enter services. Securing Trade certification and funds, as well as planning and procuring services, all had to happen simultaneously. The complex and intensive needs of the target population and the benefits clock meant that the pressure to move ahead did not relent during the project. JCS tried to stay ahead of this pace by meeting with career center and training provider representatives to plan for transitions and next steps.

Stakeholders felt that JCS' efforts to customize and secure the right mix of services were well spent. They also advocated additional planning and sustained involvement of practitioners in this process. They felt that JCS was wise to include training providers in the process of determining which trainings to offer the Power-One workers. The State Trade office also gave JCS high marks for working with vendors to customize training services. This level of planning and customization, she said, had not been seen outside of Boston. *"Most of the workers would have ended up with just EFE,"* said a Trade program manager. *"We were more pro-active in developing services that weren't part of the existing structure,"* said a City staffer. Once the EFE was underway, JCS took several steps to find the right set of programs:

- Requested that all career center counselors conduct labor market information sessions with the Power-One workers. JCS provided content for these sessions which were designed to familiarize them with various industries and occupations, and the skill and education requirements of each;
- Conducted a survey of workers' occupational interests and goals;
- Consulted with a group of training vendors (many of them also the EFE providers) to determine what type of training was realistic for this group of workers; and
- Conducted a mid-project procurement for training services, using the input gained through the previous two steps. Through this process, JCS also challenged training vendors to see how they might relax their entry requirements, and make other accommodations in order to accept the Power-One workers.

"What was unusual about this process was that we really looked at what was the right mix of services. We've never done that before," said one training provider. *"To survey people--the whole concept of asking people what they wanted to do... It was unique that we spun out a bunch of training programs specifically based on their needs and interests."* This same training provider also questioned whether it was fair to ask people what they wanted when the options were quite limited. In fact, the list of options put to the workers included ten choices of relatively low-skilled occupations (with the exception of machining, which ultimately proved unfeasible) plus an "other" category.

Some program representatives felt that JCS' consultations with them should have been more ongoing and involved program staff that is engaged day-to-day in providing ESL, job development and other services. One provider noted that she would like to see a similar level of consultation prior to JCS issuing other requests for proposals.

Some career center staff in particular felt that JCS should have taken more time, and perhaps even more risks, in selecting which trainings to offer the Power-One workers. They felt that given the extreme challenges these workers would face in the labor market, JCS should have invested in better research. *"I think the money should be used to research what kind of program would be right, what are the skills from the home country, what is the job market and what does the employer want?"* said one career center representative.

Provider agencies also would have benefited from additional planning time and familiarity with effective practices for working with similar populations. Some providers said that they needed more time than had been allotted to start up programs. They cited short notice and significant uncertainty in the weeks leading up to supposed start-dates as to whether they were to run courses or not. These situations were likely caused by the short time-line described above, uncertainty around funding availability, and the fact that at the beginning, many participants were assessed and accepted at more than one EFE program.

Agency staff felt that they benefited from information and "strategy" sharing with their colleagues. They also said that following an intensive, difficult project like Power-One, a worthwhile complement to the planning process is review and reflection on what worked and what didn't work. They considered their participation in this evaluation a part of that process.

The challenge of preparing the local workforce development system to handle large-scale lay-offs--particularly of LEP populations--is formidable. All indications point to a deepening crisis. For example:

- National, state and local demographic changes indicate a growing segment of the workforce is non-native English speaking and lacks educational and occupational credentials;
- Jobs requiring minimal English, educational and occupational credentials are declining, as evidenced by the out-migration of manufacturing plants such as Power-One; and
- Federal regulations now require laid-off workers to matriculate into training programs within a significantly shorter time period than they were under the Power-One project. Previously, workers had 210 days or 30 weeks after their lay-off date or the company Trade certification to enroll in training. As of November 2002, they have 16 weeks from the lay-off date, or 8 weeks from Trade certification.¹⁴ With many people subject to the latter restriction (8 weeks), that offers a very short window to set up services. This is especially true in cases where expenditures are over \$100,000 and a procurement process--such as bidding on an RFP--is required. *"Ramping up these big projects will be impossible. Doing a procurement process is lengthy. I don't know how it will work. And it will be the ESL population that suffers."*

JCS has contemplated ways to increase and improve capacity to work with similar populations. Some of them already have been implemented in a project that began in late 2002 assisting immigrant workers laid off from the Federal Mogul plant in Brighton.

14 "Trade Act of 1974, as Amended with provisions of the Trade Reform Act of 2002," MA Division of Employment and Training.

Changes in system coordination

All stakeholders interviewed noted that there was a higher level of coordination and information sharing around the Power-One project than they normally experience in providing workforce development services in Boston. Examples of increased coordination are as follows:

- JCS, Trade program, Rapid Response, CPA and Career Center staff and other representatives all participated in mass meetings with workers, particularly early on;
- JCS brought on a part-time Power-One coordinator twice during project, for 3-4 months each;
- Career Center counselors met and communicated frequently to share information and strategies;
- Training vendors shared information informally throughout the project;
- JCS and career center counselors met frequently on Power-One, beyond regularly scheduled more general meetings;
- Career Center staff conducted on-site workshops for workers while they were in EFE;
- JCS met bi-monthly with the worker committee organized by CPA staff and volunteers; and
- JCS and Commonwealth Corporation collaborated on a mid-program procurement.

JCS' regular meetings with the worker committee are particularly notable, as this represents a new voice in discussions around workforce development services. This committee did not have a role in the actual planning of which services to provide and how, but it did provide regular feedback on how things were going, and what problems had arisen within programs. The worker committee also provided JCS with a means to communicate with larger numbers of workers through informal networks. JCS staff said they felt this committee was valuable and worthy of replication in the future.

Some career center staff said they felt that JCS should have hired a permanent coordinator for the duration of the project. *"Things were very loose, very unstructured,"* said a career center staff person. *"With all due respect to JCS--they had never seen anything like this before--they should have hired someone immediately. You need someone coordinating from JCS, communicating with the vendors, the career centers, the state."* The initial impact of the lack of coordination, said this same person, was an overload on the career centers.

One training provider said that the dissemination of information to workers should have been better coordinated, in order to stem the spread of conflicting information. Some training vendors also expressed frustration with a lack of assistance on placement from career centers.

One set of relationships and communication that did not appear to function particularly well was that between the State Trade office and the vendors. Some vendors stated that it was somewhat unclear how they were supposed to interact. The Trade manager noted that her superiors direct her to communicate through the career centers and not directly with the vendors. Resources, she said, simply do not permit the two state Trade representatives to work directly with the training vendors to help them understand Trade regulations. Thus these lines of communication need to be clarified, and the role of career centers as a critical link between the state and local vendors may need to be strengthened.

Changes in program design

As discussed in the previous section, adjustments small and large were made in the provision of workforce development services to accommodate the Power-One workers. These changes, made at the system level down to the course design and curriculum level, included:

- Providing laid-off workers with hands-on assistance with applying for benefits;
- Conducting assessments at vendor sites, not career centers;
- Dividing existing "level 1" ESL courses into multiple levels;
- Using bi-lingual staff to provide labor market/job search curriculum and job development services in native language;
- Re-tooling curriculum to deliver written and oral lessons at lower comprehension level;
- Using fewer text-based learning materials;
- Providing students with tutor;s
- Lowering English level entry requirements for skills training courses;
- Extending skills program length to allow for more English instruction, longer internships;
- Redesigning skills training curriculum to integrate more English instruction; and
- Expanding pool of employers and target occupations to include positions attainable by very limited English speakers.

Some of the changes in program design described by program staff were made in advance, before Power-One clients ever came through their door. Others were made once staff observed how the classes and job search activities were progressing.

Involvement of community-based immigrant advocacy organization

Workers, City staff, career center and training vendor staff, and CPA staff and volunteers were nearly unanimous in their sentiment that the Power-One workers had benefited from the work of the Chinese Progressive Association. The impact was felt in the following ways:

- Program availability: CPA organized demonstrations and letter-writing campaigns in order to help secure NEG funds and Trade certification;
- Access to and knowledge about benefits: CPA brought workers together to learn about and apply for appropriate income, health and training benefits. CPA also ensured that workers understood the schedule of different benefits and the importance of maintaining program attendance;
- Program participation and retention: Early on, CPA helped to give the workers a sense of direction, and quell their fears about being out of a job and having to contend with scare tactics by company representatives. Later, CPA kept workers together as they awaited start-up of benefits and training. They impressed upon workers the value of training to their future employment;
- Flow of services: CPA acted *"Like a central coordinator,"* as one career center staffer put it. CPA divided workers into groups and tried to see that they did not overwhelm career centers and training agencies. CPA helped *"...change a group of laid-off workers into four groups of students;"*
- Program delivery: CPA helped ensure workers knew where to go, and what to anticipate. In some cases the effect of this was to overwhelm career center staff, yet most training providers felt this made their work easier;
- Role of voice of workers in program design: CPA organized and maintained a worker committee that met regularly with JCS on training issues; and
- Worker expectations: CPA and workers' political victories in getting media attention and funds, together with worker outreach and education, resulted in heightened worker expectations, and the confidence to demand things to which they knew they were entitled.

"I think without the Chinese Progressive Association, the Power-One program would not exist," said one worker. *"The staff at CPA helped me and other Power-One workers to gain access to UI benefits and employment services that we could not have done ourselves."*

Some workers may, in fact, have attributed a greater role to CPA in making the services possible than was actually true. In fact, federal and state programs exist, and the City of Boston has long provided assistance to dislocated workers. But CPA did have a real impact on the timing, duration and delivery method of training services. Further, the fact that the workers felt confident that someone was advocating on their behalf is noteworthy. This alone is unique, particularly coming out of a non-union setting.

Career center staff, who had more contact with CPA than their EFE and skills training colleagues, were not uniform on their views on the impact of CPA's role. Had CPA focused less on keeping the workers together as group, they might have received more individualized attention, suggested one career center staff member. Similarly, with the workers feeling a sense of entitlement to a certain array of services, one career counselor felt this limited the ability to make recommendations specific to the individual. One interviewee called it "over empowerment." Already overburdened by large caseloads, career counselors found it difficult to balance their time between their Power-One customers, who were collectively more vocal about their needs, and their other customers.

What created challenges for staff, however, may have removed them for participants. By keeping the workers informed, said another career center staff person, CPA was helping to ensure that all the workers had access to all services available, and that they didn't lose out just because someone didn't tell them. *"I think if something's available, everyone should know about it, and be able to get it."* Another said, *"One and a half years was a lot of time for these workers. CPA knew that. It shows what the benefits of a strong political voice can do for a population. The City had to do something. CPA made us crazy, but it did a lot of good."* Thus CPA's work had the effect, too, of making the system function more effectively.

Relationship among stakeholders

In addition to an enhanced level of coordination among different stakeholders, the Power-One project brought about some important changes in relationships among the city, JCS, the workforce development network, CPA and the Chinese-American community in Boston. For example, the project:

- Helped to raise the level of trust between JCS and CPA, and also the Chinese-American community;
- Generated a new or greater appreciation for community-based advocacy by workforce development agencies; and
- Broadened the practice of "participatory planning" through the inclusion of both workers and program staff in the planning for service delivery.

Another benefit of the project, though not directly related to the workforce development system, is that it helped to raise CPA's standing in the eyes of workers and other members of the Chinese immigrant community who previously had not been involved with the organization.

More large-scale LEP worker dislocations are likely, given demographic and economic changes in Boston and elsewhere. In this instance, the employer failed to give workers and state officials proper notice of closure, and services did not begin until six months after the first wave of workers had been dismissed. Now, with tighter time lines in place for laid off workers entering training, state agencies must do more to maximize planning time and build long-term capacity. The state should enforce applicable laws more vigilantly, seek and obtain funds more quickly, and provide basic readjustment services in needed languages. At the local level, JCS and service providers themselves should look toward ways to broaden industry and occupational options; to expand their breadth and depth in ability and capacity to serve very limited English speakers; and to enhance collaboration between training vendors and career centers.

The presence of a grassroots community-based advocacy organization had a tangible, positive effect on program participation levels, the efficiency and coordination of service delivery, and in a more limited way, the workers' engagement in decision-making. This ongoing role also served to help attune the workforce development network more closely to the particular needs of Chinese immigrant workers. In the future, workforce development planners and service providers would be wise to engage similar community groups in outreach, development and implementation of services, particularly if and when linguistically and culturally appropriate capacity is otherwise low. Such groups might also be helpful in designing approaches to training that are culturally appropriate for the population.

Better collection and use of data are essential in order to make program-planning decisions and to evaluate processes, outcomes and impact. Much improvement is needed in the accurate and regular collection of benchmark data such as English skills. Likewise, data on placement jobs, including number of hours worked, benefits status, industry and occupation, also needs much greater attention. Program administrators need to require better accuracy in these areas, and staff should review data as it is received. JCS and other relevant agencies also need to address capacity to extract and analyze MOSES data on a regular basis.

Use of English skills assessment tools should be more standardized across service providers. Assessment should be done prior to commencement of services and at the completion of each service component. Even among the small network of service providers involved in the Power-One project, the lack of standard tools created difficulties and uncertainties. When students move from one ESL provider to the next, and from an ESL provider to training provider, it must be clear at what level they are performing. From a planning perspective, sound information is needed to determine the right mix of services at the beginning and at interim points in the program. Further, language skills should be assessed after skills training, particularly when the program integrates ESL. This will help determine the impact of training on language acquisition.

V. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Power One Project provided the workforce development system and immigrant advocacy organizations in Boston with one of their greatest challenges and greatest learning opportunities in recent years. The project has provided many valuable lessons for City and State agencies, training vendors, advocacy groups, and others interested in developing successful programs and policy to serve LEP immigrant workers as they struggle to cope with dislocations and other adverse trends in the labor market. This final section of the report offers some of those lessons, together with recommendations where they are appropriate.

A combination of English and occupational skills training improved labor market outcomes for laid-off Power-One workers.

Placement rates were higher for almost all participants who went through any type of skills training than for those who did not. They were significantly higher for those whose skills training followed English for Employment.

Customized skills training services worked better for Power-One workers than did enrollment into existing training courses.

Offering participants a wide range of options through individual training accounts is positive; however, limited English speakers, in particular, need services that are attuned to their language, cultural and social needs.

Extended services were highly valuable for those with the lowest English levels. Overall, this group did less well on employment and earnings, which is not surprising. However, those who were able to follow up their English classes with skills training were twice as likely to find employment, and had stronger wage gains than those who did not.

Workers recognize that re-employment itself is serving as a valuable tool for further improving language skills. Even when some aspects of their replacement jobs--including lower compensation, worse location or working conditions--are a step backward, workers believe that being able to speak and improve their English skills is a worthwhile investment.

Most workers, including those who found replacement jobs and those who did not, will require additional assistance to reach family sustaining wages. Re-employed workers are earning an average of \$9.29 per hour. Interviews with participants and service providers indicate that program graduates received job readiness services focused on the next job, but emerged thin on knowledge of the labor market and more long-term career development.

Workers with higher education levels and higher English levels had stronger employment outcomes than others. However, higher educated, limited English speakers have difficulty in translating their credentials into earning power in the general labor market. They need assistance in gaining appropriate language training and access to their fields.

Participants who went through skills training in culinary arts or hospitality were more likely to find employment in related jobs than those who went through office skills or childcare assistant training. Most workers who found replacement jobs are now working in retail, hotels and motels, health services, and, surprisingly, manufacturing. A full 19 percent (and possibly more informally) are working in restaurants.

High program participation rates were likely a result of concerted efforts by the Chinese Progressive Association to maintain group cohesiveness, and by CPA and JCS to provide hands-on assistance to workers in accessing and registering for services. Other factors may have been workers' awareness of their lack of marketable skills and the bleak labor market, and the fact that in order to receive extended unemployment insurance benefits they needed to enroll in training.

The workforce development organizations involved in Power-One were responsive and able to adapt their programs in various ways to serve this population. These included conducting initial, timely assessments of all workers, adjusting entry requirements for skills programs; increasing ESL content in courses; expanding the pool of employers and jobs targeted for placement; and adapting teaching styles and course materials.

The Power-One Project served as an opportunity for workforce development agencies to observe the need for and develop sound approaches to addressing and accommodating language and cultural issues into their programs.

Providers were challenged to understand the range of strengths and needs of this population, to establish meaningful communication, and to find appropriate teaching and job search strategies. Over time, providers met with some successes; additional sharing of practices and training would be beneficial to providers and future clients alike.

JCS, the workforce development providers, career centers and the State reached a new level of program planning and coordination through this initiative.

JCS should build on the success of involving multiple stakeholders including service providers, workers and community advocates; planning and procuring customized services; gathering input on appropriate industry and occupational targets given the service population; and hiring culturally, linguistically competent program staff.

More large-scale LEP worker dislocations workers are likely, given demographic and economic changes in Boston and elsewhere. With tighter time lines in place for laid off workers entering training, State agencies must do more to maximize planning time and build long-term capacity.

Power-One International failed to give workers and State officials proper notice of closure, and services did not begin until six months after the first wave of workers had been dismissed. The State needs to enforce applicable laws more vigilantly, seek and obtain funds more quickly, and provide basic readjustment services in needed languages. At the local level, JCS and service providers themselves should look toward ways to expand industry and occupational options; increase their breadth and depth in ability and capacity to serve very limited English speakers; and enhance collaboration between training vendors and career centers.

The presence of a grassroots community-based advocacy organization had a tangible effect on program participation levels, the efficiency and coordination of service delivery, and in a more limited way, the workers' engagement in decision-making. This ongoing role also served to help attune the workforce development network more closely to the particular needs of Chinese immigrant workers. Future workforce development planners and service providers would be wise to engage similar community groups in outreach for development and implementation of services, particularly if and when linguistically and culturally appropriate capacity is otherwise low. Such groups might also be helpful in designing approaches to training that are culturally appropriate for the population.

Better collection and use of data are essential in order to make program-planning decisions and to evaluate processes, outcomes and impact. Much improvement is needed in the accurate and regular collection of benchmark data such as English skills. Likewise, data on placement jobs, including number of hours worked and benefits status, and industry and occupations, also needs much greater attention. Program administrators need to require better accuracy in these areas, and staff should review data as it is received. JCS and other relevant agencies also need to address capacity to extract and analyze MOSES data on a regular basis.

Use of English skills assessment tools should be more standardized across service providers. Assessment should be done prior to commencement of services and at the completion of each service component. Even among the small network of service providers involved in the Power-One project, the lack of standard tools created difficulties and uncertainties. When students move from one ESL provider to the next, or from an ESL provider to training provider, it must be clear at what level they are performing. From a planning perspective, sound information is needed to determine the right mix of services at the beginning and at interim points in the program. Further, language skills should be assessed after skills training, particularly when the program integrates ESL. This will help determine the impact of training.



THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF JOBS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

43 Hawkins Street
Boston, MA 02114
617.722.4300
www.cityofboston.gov/bra